

watch while the Walthours slept. Abbott watched in one direction while I watched the other, which led in the direction of the residence. I soon dismounted, tied my horse and walked cautiously up in front of the house to see if I could see or hear anyone about the premises. While there I saw a dim light in a Negro house a short distance up the lane. I cautiously approached the house and gently knocked at the door. The occupants seemed asleep but soon awoke, and I soon found that some women and children occupied the house. I asked if they had seen any rebels about there recently, feigning myself to be a federal soldier. To this they replied negatively, but they had heard that some of them had been around Murfreesboro and had played havoc with the railroad and were fighting the Yankees in the direction of Nashville.

"I then went back, mounted my horse and remained on post until our time expired when the Walthour boys relieved us. I dismounted, and being so anxious to sleep, I took no time to take my rubber and blanket from my saddle, but lay down upon the ground holding my bridle reins in my hand, and in almost no time was sound asleep."

"In a seemingly short time I was suddenly awakened by a rumbling noise as if a mighty raging storm or an earthquake like unto that which destroyed ancient Lishon. I sprang to my feet and saw it was day dawn and Bob Walthour cried out, 'Yankees, boys'. I looked and through an open wood, southward I saw a column of Yankee cavalry charging our camp at full speed, yelling as soldiers always do on like occasions. Abbott and I instantly sprang into our saddles and went at full speed for our camp. The Walthour boys being already mounted on post had the advantage of us in getting the start and succeeded in reaching camp before the charging Yankees did."

Zeke and Ben never did make it back to their camp near Woodbury. After the camp was overrun and their comrades were captured or killed, they hid out in the woods for hours. Afraid they would be shot as spies if discovered, Zeke and Ben surrendered to the first Union cavalymen who came near. Both men were taken to Murfreesboro and thence to Camp Chase, a prisoner of war camp near Columbus, Ohio, where they were to spend the duration of the war.

Released from Camp Chase on June 14, 1865, Zeke returned to Alabama and Tallapoosa County. He and his wife, Mary Elizabeth, spent the remainder of their lives farming and raising a large family of 10 children near Eagle Creek. Many of their descendants still live in this area today.

Although Zeke's story may seem to be commonplace, it is indeed exceptional for that very fact. For in it is reflected a theme of struggle, hardship and adventure that prevails in any war story, both in his time and ours.

BY WILLIAM GREGORY WILSON

Yankees! Boys

As an old man rocked his chair on the front porch, a mid summer's wind gently swayed the big oaks that surround his little farmhouse in the Alabama hill country. In spite of the stifling heat he still wore a long beard as he had since the days before the war. He usually spoke of the war sparingly - many things too disturbing to recount in any great detail. But sometimes these memories would be triggered by a long forgotten sound or smell, bringing the old man a flood of the past. When he finally did begin to speak of his place in that time, his grandchildren would stop playing and gather about him as he told of Gettysburg and the Battles for Atlanta.

This scene was repeated many times in Alabama around the turn of the century. During the War Between the States an estimated 75,000 Alabamians served the Confederacy. Tallapoosa County alone raised roughly 21 companies of infantry and cavalry totaling some 2,000 plus troops. An unknown number of these men were killed or died of disease during the conflict. Following the surrender many Confederate veterans migrated to Texas or the Western Territories, eager to leave the war's devastation behind. But others stayed on, raising their families and rebuilding their lives in a land they called home. One of the men who stayed was John Ezekial Abbott of Eagle Creek, known to his friends and family as "Zeke".

Enlisting as a private on August 14, 1862 at New Site, Zeke was soon sent to the front in Virginia as a member of Co. G, 6th Alabama Infantry, Army of Northern Virginia. Private Abbott first "saw the elephant" in a skirmish near Martinsburg, Va. on June 13, 1863. According to surviving records Zeke suffered from dysentery throughout the summer of 1863. Due to its disabling effects he was unable to keep up with his retreating comrades and was captured on July 4, 1863 a few miles west of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Five days later at Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor, Private Abbott was paroled and released. After his return south Zeke was admitted to the C.S. General Hospital at Petersburg, Va. on August 12. Although he was discharged from the hospital a week later, Zeke never returned to his regiment. It is presumed he took "French leave" and headed for home. It is not known if he ever intended to return, but Private Abbott was carried on the muster roll of the 6th Alabama Infantry for the remainder of the war as "away without leave".

During the summer of 1864 north Georgia was the scene of heavy fighting as Sherman's Army tried to take Atlanta. Early June found the Union Army in front of the



PVT JOHN E. ABBOTT
Co. H. 8th Confederate Cavalry
Tallapoosa Co. ALA

Confederate defenses on Kennesaw Mountain, a few miles north of Marietta. War had finally come to the Deep South.

On June 12, 1864, Zeke Abbott, evidently having regained his health, enlisted as a Private in Co. H of the 8th Confederate Cavalry at Marietta. Company H was made up of men from Tallapoosa and Randolph Counties. The remainder of the regiment was from various Alabama counties with a few from Mississippi - thus its "Confederate" designation. The Alabama companies, however, disdained their official name and referred to themselves as the 8th Alabama. All this aside, the 8th fought daily during June and July of 1864 as Sherman encircled and finally took Atlanta. On August 10th 8th Confederate Cavalry, part of General Joe Wheeler's Cavalry Corp., started off on what is often referred to as "Wheeler's Last Grand Raid". During this raid Zeke Abbott was captured again near Woodbury, Tennessee on September 6, 1864.

The following excerpt is from the pamphlet, A War Story or My Experience In A Yankee Prison, by Ben W. Darsey of the 5th Georgia Cavalry. The incident as related here took place on September 6, 1864 near Woodbury, Tennessee during Wheeler's Raid. The Confederate soldier mentioned by the name of "Abbott" is John Ezekial Abbott.

"There being a field of corn nearby, we hastily fed our horses. But about the time I got my horse fed, and was in the act of lying down upon the ground to rest, I was detailed to go out on picket post with Robert and Taylor Walthour of my regiment and Abbott of the 8th Alabama. We were posted nearby a large residence situated on a big road about four or five hundred yards west of our camp. Abbott and I took the first